

DepEd convenes attorneys, legal personnel for 1st nat'l summit

QUEZON CITY, January 27, 2019 – The Department of Education (DepEd), through its Legal Affairs Strand, conducted the First National Summit of Attorneys and Legal Personnel last December 12 to 14 with the theme, “Law at the Service of Education.”

The Summit convened the lawyers and legal personnel of DepEd from the central, regional, and division offices to provide a venue for better appreciation of their important role in the bigger picture of advancing the constitutional right to quality, accessible, relevant, and liberating basic education.

The pioneering gathering gave the participants an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the inter-relatedness of the mandate of the DepEd legal offices, with the functions of other DepEd offices and government agencies towards the effective and efficient delivery of education services to the Filipino learners.

DepEd Secretary Leonor Magtolis Briones delivered the event’s keynote address, and recognized the crucial role of legal officers: “*Importante ang ginagawa ninyo kasi youshape*, you influence the course, the direction of government policy, and you also contribute to changing the lives of people for the better, hopefully.”

“And we lean on legal to contribute to advice on policy directions because policy has to be informed by law,” the Education chief added.

The child in basic education

“Ours is the biggest ‘law firm’ on education in the country, with the greatest impact on the realization of every Filipino child’s constitutional right to basic education,” Undersecretary for Legal Affairs Josephine Maribojoc told the approximately 250 participants, whom she referred to as the “legal vanguards” of DepEd, in her welcome remarks.

She thus emphasized, “We must be not only legally right, but also educationally correct in our work as DepEd lawyers and legal personnel.” She likewise stressed that the child lies at the heart of what the lawyers and legal personnel of the Department do. She then introduced Manila Science High School student Gabrielle Crystal Reyes.

Reyes highlighted the importance of education with the right values and reminded everyone that education provides the foundation for a learner’s future, and a responsible and strong citizenry.

Critical, diverse roles

Officials and guest speakers enlightened the attorneys and legal personnel on their significant role as education and child rights advocates; visionaries, planners, and facilitators of the provision of education inputs; managers of legal services and information; defenders of the principles of government service and code of conduct for public servants; and a professional and a person.

These include Undersecretaries Jesus Mateo, Lorna Dig Dino, Annalyn Sevilla, Alain Pascua, Nepomuceno Malaluan, and Tonisito Umali; central office directors Roger Masapol and Joel Erestain, and other officials and personnel; Region I Director Malcolm Garma, Schools Division of Candon City Superintendent Jorge Reinante, Caninguan National High School principal Jesus Insilada, and Culiati Elementary School teacher Lou Sabrina Ongkiko.

Topics discussed include the Department's strategic direction and goals; basic education curriculum and programs as the core function of DepEd; and the role of legal officers on various areas including basic education facilities and school sites, budgeting, policy development, planning and research, and procurement cycle.

Freedom of Information (FOI) and transparency, public assistance and information management, legislation and relevant processes in DepEd, and the Legal Affairs human resource and organizational development, were further tackled.

Other resource speakers in the three-day summit were officials from the Commission on Human Rights, Office of the Solicitor General, Anti-Red Tape Authority, Office of the Ombudsman, Commission on Audit, and the Philippine Career Executive Service Board. They led the discourse on child's rights; case prevention and mitigation strategies; the Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act; challenges and strategies in the disposition of administrative cases and complaints; auditing; and the role of DepEd lawyers in public service.

Interactive sessions were also conducted to focus on the lawyers' and legal personnel's well-being as professionals and persons. Updates and developments in the Legal Affairs Strand were also discussed, while participants shared their best practices, recommendations, and concerns. Legal Service Director, Atty. Suzette Gannaban-Medina, led the synthesis of the summit which was formally concluded with the closing remarks of Assistant Secretary for Legal Affairs Rhoan Orebia.

"The Summit reminded me of why I am here in DepEd. *Nandito ako para magsilbi sa mga bata,*" a participant from CALABARZON shared.

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